

NOTE: The interview began at 5:13 p.m. in the 15th Floor Lounge at the Park Plaza Hotel. In his remarks, the President referred to John Rocker, relief pitcher, MLB Atlanta Braves; Hank Aaron, member, Baseball Hall of Fame; Andrew Young, former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N.; Kevin Garnett, power forward, NBA Minnesota Timberwolves; and former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa. An interviewer referred to Wolf Blitzer, correspondent, Cable News Network. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Boston

January 18, 2000

Thank you so much. Let me say, I am delighted, first of all, to be back here in the Solomonts' home. I love this place, and it's obviously a place with a loving family, and I feel very good that they let us come in. I thank Steve and Barbara Grossman for their work for our party, and for their help in this event tonight, and all of you for being here.

I want to join Mayor Rendell in thanking you, Mayor Menino. We had a great day in Boston today, had a great anti-crime event. And Senator Menard, thank you. And I'd like to also thank our DNC treasurer, Andy Tobias, my longtime friend, for being here. And thank you, Brian Hardwick, and thank you, Fran Katz.

We're going to have a chance to visit later on. I just want to make a few points. First of all, the kids were fabulous, the singers. I loved that. I'm something of a music lover, and they sang that wonderful old Jim Croce song—those of you who are about my age, maybe a little younger—it's all the more wistful because he did die young. And there's that great line in that song: "there never seems to be enough time to do the things you want to do once you find them." It's something that the older you get the more sober it makes you to hear that line.

And I guess if I could say anything to you tonight that you haven't heard, is that we do have time to do what we want to do, as a country and as a people, to a degree virtually unheard of in our history. And we need, in this election and in this year, to continue to

find the right things and to find the strength and the vision and the will to do them.

I am profoundly grateful to the people of Boston and the people of Massachusetts. They have been very good to me and to Hillary and to Al and Tipper Gore. And indeed, all of New England has been very good to—we have carried all the States in New England in both elections. And that is something for which I am very grateful. And I am quite mindful of the fact that the energy and the drive for that came in no small measure out of Massachusetts and out of the uncommon kindness of the Democrats in New Hampshire and staying with me against all the odds on more than one occasion.

But what I want you to think about is this. A lot of you mentioned to me the wonderful 100-year-old woman who came to the White House on Saturday to the radio address. I love that lady because she was on television. She continually referred to me as a young man. *[Laughter]* And I just love that. *[Laughter]* And we got in a great discussion about older people, and Willard Scott asked me if I had anybody in my family who lived to be 100. I said, no, but I had a very close uncle who died at 91 a couple years ago, who helped to raise me.

And I told the story about how, when he was 86 he used to, once a week, take a 92-year-old woman for a drive and once a week take a 95-year-old woman for a drive. He was describing this to me, and I said, "Well, Uncle Buddy, you like those older women, don't you?" He said, "Yeah, I do. Seems like they're a little more settled." *[Laughter]*

So anyway, it's all a matter of your perspective whether you're young or not. And as I've gotten older, I've learned that the definition of young is anybody that's a day younger than I am. But I've lived a fair number of years now, and there has never been a time in my lifetime when our country has had at once this level of economic prosperity, social progress, self-confidence, without overwhelming internal crisis or external threat. Therefore, I would argue to you that we have an unparalleled opportunity to do the things we want to do and that every year, it's about defining them, finding them, and dreaming them.

The second thing I want to say is that—Alan talked about all the tough times when we’ve been here. The great British essayist Samuel Johnson said that “Nothing so concentrates a man’s mind as the prospect of his own destruction.” And many times, when the Democratic Party’s been under the gun, when the administration’s been under the gun, people marveled at how well we did. Well, what option did we have? If we wanted to show up for work every day for the American people, we just had to concentrate, take a deep breath, and keep on working.

I have found that sometimes people are most vulnerable to making errors when they think things are going along so well they don’t have to think about them. And this is not just—this is true of people—everybody here who is over 30 in this room—certainly everybody over 30—everybody who can think of at least one instance in your own life, when in your personal life, your family life, or your business life, something went wrong because you thought things were going so well you didn’t have to think about it anymore.

So I would say to you that the thing that I am seized with here in this final year of my Presidency is keeping the attention of the American people on the future and making people understand that this is an enormous opportunity and, accordingly, a profound responsibility, to define the dreams that we have for the 21st century and then to come up with a strategy toward achieving them.

For me, it means finishing the unfinished business of the last year, the Patients’ Bill of Rights, the hate crimes legislation, the prescription medicine for people on Medicare, gun legislation. It means an aggressive agenda, which you will hear more about in the State of the Union, for the last year that I will be your President. But it also means defining those big, long-term goals that can’t be achieved in a year that we have to move toward.

And I believe that elections are always about the future. And I believe we have—I have always believed, as anybody who’s had any conversation with me about this—I have always believed we would do fine this year if we were proud of our record, explained how it was part of a coherent philosophy that was driving us into the future, but more im-

portantly, articulated a vision that America could buy into for tomorrow and that we then had to be competitive, in terms of communicating our message. And that’s what you’ve helped us to do.

So, we’ll have more to say about this as the night goes on, but I think it would be helpful—you all know what I think the big challenges of the future are. I think we have to make the most of the revolutions in science and technology, especially in biotech and telecommunications, in materials development and environmental technologies.

I think we have to embrace, not run away from, globalization, but put a more human face on it so that everybody has a chance to feel they’re treated fairly and has a chance to win. I think we have to give every child in this country a 21st century education, something we’ve never really done in our whole history, giving every child whatever the globally excellent education was at the moment, and that we’ve got to deal with the aging of America. We’ve got to decide what we’re going to do with Social Security and Medicare, and how we’re going to prepare for this explosion in the number of people over 65 doubling in the next 30 years. Most of us who are here hope to be among them.

We have to decide what our responsibilities are in an increasingly interdependent world to deal with the global challenges we have. And I think most important of all, as I have repeatedly said since the day I got here, we have to decide whether we really believe we’re all in this together, and we have to keep expanding the real family of America. We have to—that’s why I’m so strongly in favor of the hate crimes legislation, the “Employment Non-Discrimination Act,” continuing to work toward reconciling the differences that rend America and the world apart day in and day out. Every day now, it seems like I’m spending more and more time trying to reactivate the Middle East peace process. But in a calm setting like this, and you see all those children up there singing tonight, it’s self-evident to all of us that we have more in common than whatever it is that divides us.

And somehow, if I could leave one gift to America, I would leave us the ability—if I

could just wave a magic wand, instead of getting up and going to work in the White House every day—I would leave us the ability to remember that, every hour of every day, in everything we do, because we waste so much energy and we get ourselves in so much trouble in this old world just trying to pull ourselves up by putting other people down. And I am convinced that the only way we can make the most of all the modern wonders of tomorrow is to learn this most ancient of lessons.

So those are my big ideas for the 21st century. But the Democratic Party has been reformed, reenergized, and reborn in the last 7 years, in a way that is entirely consistent with our history and our values. And we can be really proud of the role we've played in the economic revitalization of America and the declining crime rate and welfare rolls and the fact that 90 percent of our children are immunized against serious diseases for the first time and all the progress that has been made.

But every election is about tomorrow. And I believe, with all my heart, if we make time to do the things we should do, we will do fine in the year 2000. The only thing that can keep us from ratifying this important direction the country has taken in the last 7 years is if either we don't care enough to exert the effort to fight and to finance our side of the argument or we don't care enough to articulate the choices so that it's clear what the election is about.

And all I can say is, if everybody in the country who thinks the way we do were as committed as you are, then I wouldn't even worry about that.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:20 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Alan D. Solomont, former national finance chair, Democratic National Committee (DNC), and his wife, Susan; Steven Grossman, former DNC national chair, and his wife, Barbara; Edward G. Rendell, DNC general chair; Mayor Thomas M. Menino of Boston; State Senator Joan M. Menard, chair, Massachusetts State Democratic Party; Fran Katz, former DNC national finance chair; and former Today Show weatherman Willard Scott.

Remarks on the Health Insurance Initiative and an Exchange With Reporters

January 19, 2000

The President. Good morning, everyone. I'm glad to be joined today by Secretary Shalala, Secretary Herman, Deputy Secretary Eizenstat, and OPM Director Janice Lachance. We want to talk to you about the health care of America's families, one of the biggest challenges we face still in this new century.

Today I want to talk about two major proposals that are in my budget for 2001, which will help Americans to shoulder the cost of health care by extending coverage to millions of people who do not now have it and by helping Americans of all ages meet the demands of long-term care. These proposals are a significant investment in the health of Americans, another step toward giving every American access to quality health care.

As our Nation ages and we live longer lives, we face the need to provide long-term care to larger and larger numbers of Americans. Yesterday we put forward proposals to help Americans to face these new challenges, first by providing a \$3,000 tax credit for the cost of long-term care—that is 3 times the one I proposed in last year's State of the Union—second, by expanding access to home-based care through Medicaid; and third, by establishing new support networks for caregivers. We shouldn't let another year go by without helping those who are doing so much to help others. And I will say again, we should also, this year, pass the Patients' Bill of Rights.

We must also keep fighting to extend affordable health care to Americans who lack it. This is a continuing problem in our Nation, as all of you know. Still there are too many children who lose their hearing because an ear infection goes untreated or wind up in the emergency room because they couldn't see a doctor in a more regular way. Too many parents skimp on their own health to provide coverage for their children; too many missed chances to prevent illness and prepare young people to lead healthy lives—all these the products of the fact that tens